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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: ERITREA SEEKS "CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT" WITH U.S.

1. (SBU) AMBASSADOR CALLED IN  
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Foreign Minister Osman Saleh convoked the ambassador October 26 and spoke at length about Eritrea's (professed) view of the need for the United States and Eritrea to improve relations for each country's mutual benefit. He characterized the September discussions with Ambassador Rice and Assistant Secretary Carson in New York as "welcomed and constructive." The foreign minister said he appreciated the Secretary's September 26 invitation to the meeting on food security, but regretted he had been unable to speak with her on the margins of that event.

2. (SBU) SIDEBARS AT ABUJA MEETING ON DARFUR?  
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The foreign minister, who was about to depart for the AU's Abuja conference on Darfur, asked if the embassy could pass the word that he and Yemane Ghebreab would welcome the chance to discuss Darfur and other Sudan issues with "Johnnie Carson, General Gration, or any other U.S. official" available in Abuja. Acknowledging Eritrea's role in helping broker the 2006 Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement, the ambassador noted that both the United States and Eritrea had an interest in its successful implementation but cautioned that efforts by outsiders to manipulate events in Sudan would only complicate Sudan's already difficult road ahead.

3. (SBU) FM REQUESTS MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY  
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Post understands that the Government of Eritrea has sent a letter to the Secretary via private channels requesting a meeting for the foreign minister and Yemane Ghebreab. On October 26 the foreign minister handed the ambassador a diplomatic note (text below) containing a similar request. The ambassador committed only to forwarding the request, suggesting that concrete actions, such as those discussed with A/S Carson and Ambassador Rice in New York, would demonstrate that Eritrea's stated willingness to improve relations was genuine.

BEGIN SUBSTANTIVE TEXT:

It is to be recalled that H.E. Osman Saleh Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, met and held constructive dialogue with Ambassador Susan Rice, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the UN, on the sidelines of the 64th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Eritrean government realizes the importance of continuous engagement with the United States government. In this vein, a delegation led by H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh is planning to visit the United States to hold meetings with Ms. Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State and other U.S. Government officials. The Ministry requests the cooperation of the Embassy in arranging the meeting during mid of November 2009.

END TEXT.

McMULLEN